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Raborn Has Credentials for CIA

John A. McCone's resignation as head of the Central Intelligence Agency and President Johnson's appointment of William F. Raborn Jr. to succeed him is bound to rekindle an old controversy.

Just what kind of man should head the CIA?

Should he be a soldier-diplomat like Lt. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, who ran the agency in the early 1950s? An ex-cloak and dagger operator like Allen Dulles? Or a Republican businessman like McCone, experienced in management of large organizations?

The answer depends upon the kind of world, and the kind of enemy, which exists when the question is asked.

There are persuasive arguments that Raborn, a retired vice admiral, is a good choice for the job at hand, despite his lack of intelligence background.

Today, U.S. policymakers badly need to know what if any devilment the Soviets may be planning in space. To plan intelligent policies in Southeast Asia, they must know how soon the Chinese Reds will be able to deliver A-bombs on targets in Asia—and then in America.

To get the answers to such scientific questions, placement or recruitment of secret agents high in Communist councils is vital, of course. But at least 90% of modern intelligence-gathering is done by U-2s and reconnaissance satellites, monitoring of radio traffic, and meticulous examination of some 200,000 Communist newspapers, magazines, books and scientific journals every month.

The massive collection process is worthless unless the CIA is able to organize the avalanche of information and come up with accurate interpretations.

McCone himself brought impressive talents to the job. Raborn shapes up as a worthy successor.

He has more than a passing acquaintance with science and scientists, as well as organizational problems.

Raborn bossed development of the Polaris missile, and completed it two years ahead of schedule. Along the way, he introduced a new management technique—called "PERT"—which is now widely used. Then he bossed the Navy's entire development effort.

If he turns in the same performance at CIA, the nation will be well served.